

Message Text

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INFO MEMBASSY BANGKOK 3688

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

S E C R E T RANGOON 2242

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, BM, TH

SUBJECT: BURMESE INSURGENT REQUESTS FOR THAI MEDIATION

REF: BANGKOK 14637

1. BANGKOK PRESS REPORTS OF SHAN AND KAREN INSURGENT APPROACHES SEEKING THAI MEDIATION WITH GUB HAVE UNDERSTANDABLY NOT BEEN PICKED UP IN CONTROLLED PRESS HERE. HOWEVER, MIS COLONEL TIN OO MENTIONED THEM WITH SOME AMUSEMENT IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 21, MAKING IT CLEAR GUB WOULD NOT CONSIDER SUCH MEDIATION BY RTG OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY. BURMESE, HE SAID, DO NOT NEED INTERMEDIARIES TO TALK TO OTHER BURMESE.

2. TIN OO ADDED THAT INSURGENTS KNOW WHERE TO REPORT IF THEY WISH TO CALL OFF THEIR ACTIVITIES, AND GUB HAS PROGRAM TO PROVIDE RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE UNTIL SURRENDERED INSURGENTS CAN BRING IN FIRST CROP. SUCH INSURGENTS WHO SURRENDER HAVE NEVER BEEN PUNISHED. "IF THEY WANT TO TURN THEMSELVES IN THEY KNOW WHERE TO COME AND THE TERMS THEY CAN EXPECT. BUT IF THEY WANT TO FIGHT

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WE WILL FIGHT THEM."

3. COMMENT: MOST INSURGENT LEADERS HAVE EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF RELATIVES, OLD FRIENDS, AND FORMER ASSOCIATES ON GUB SIDE THROUGH WHOM NEGOTIATIONS COULD READILY BE STARTED IF BOTH SIDES WERE WILLING. TIN OO'S HARD LINE, WHICH WE BELIEVE ACCURATELY REFLECTS GUB POSITION, IS PREDICTABLE IN LIGHT OF THIS FACT AND OF LONG-STANDING GUB INSISTENCE THAT ETHNIC MINORITIES ADAPT THEMSELVES TO BURMAN POLITICAL SYSTEM.

4. WE SHARE EMBASSY BANGKOK'S VIEW THAT INSURGENT POSITION IS BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT DUE TO MILITARY SETBACKS, FINANCIAL LOSSES ARISING FROM PRESSURE ON OPIUM TRADE, AND CONTINUING STABILITY AND SOLIDARITY OF GUB-ARMY LEADERSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, SHAN-BURMESE HOSTILITY DATES BACK MANY CENTURIES, AND ETHNIC INSURGENCIES HAVE PLAGUED BURMA SINCE INDEPENDENCE. IN THE ABSENCE OF MORE CONCILIATORY GUB POLITICAL POLICY ON REGIONAL AUTONOMY AND/OR MORE PROMISING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR MINORITIES, INSURGENCY PROBLEM LIKELY TO REMAIN INTRACTABLE.

5. ALTHOUGH IT IS DISAPPOINTING THAT GUB SHOWS SO LITTLE INTEREST IN POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH INSURGENTS, ITS LINE IS NOT LIKELY TO SOFTEN (QUITE THE CONTRARY) AS RESULT OF ANY WELL-MEANT MEDIATION EFFORTS BY OUTSIDERS. RTG REJECTION OF INSURGENT APPROACHES SEEMS TO INDICATE THAIS ARE WELL AWARE OF BURMESE SENSITIVITIES ON THIS POINT.
MARTIN

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